

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION

COREDARIUS QUINTE DOUGLAS
(#82306),

Plaintiff,

V.

HIGHLAND PARK DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC SAFETY, ET AL.,

Defendants.

No. 3:17-cv-2236-M-BN

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Plaintiff Coredarius Quinte Douglas, an inmate at the Hunt County Jail, filed this *pro se* action against two local public safety agencies. *See* Dkt. No. 3. Chief Judge Barbara M. G. Lynn referred this action to the undersigned United States magistrate judge for pretrial management under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b) and a standing order of reference. The undersigned issues the following findings of fact, conclusions of law, and recommendation that, for the reasons stated below, the Court should dismiss this action without prejudice under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 41(b).

Applicable Background

The day after this action was docketed, the Court issued a screening questionnaire requiring Douglas to file verified responses no later than September 25, 2017. *See* Dkt. No. 6. That order cautioned Douglas that “[f]ailure to provide answers to all questions may result in the dismissal of the complaint for failure to prosecute

under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b).” *Id.* at 1. As of today, it is more than one month past the deadline to respond to the questionnaire, and Douglas has yet to comply with the order or otherwise contact the Court.

Legal Standards and Analysis

Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 41(b), “a district court may dismiss an action *sua sponte* if the plaintiff fails to comply with court orders.” *Nottingham v. Warden, Bill Clements Unit*, 837 F.3d 438, 440 (5th Cir. 2016) (citing FED. R. CIV. P. 41(b); *McCullough v. Lynaugh*, 835 F.2d 1126, 1127 (5th Cir. 1988) (per curiam)). Under the same rule, a district court also “may *sua sponte* dismiss an action for failure to prosecute.” *Rosin v. Thaler*, 450 F. App’x 383, 383-84 (5th Cir. 2011) (per curiam) (citations omitted)). That authority “flows from the court’s inherent power to control its docket and prevent undue delays in the disposition of pending cases.” *Boudwin v. Graystone Ins. Co., Ltd.*, 756 F.2d 399, 401 (5th Cir. 1985) (citing *Link v. Wabash R.R. Co.*, 370 U.S. 626 (1962)).

A Rule 41(b) dismissal may be with or without prejudice. *See Long v. Simmons*, 77 F.3d 878, 879-80 (5th Cir. 1996).

Although “[l]esser sanctions such as fines or dismissal without prejudice are usually appropriate before dismissing with prejudice, ... a Rule 41(b) dismissal is appropriate where there is ‘a clear record of delay or contumacious conduct by the plaintiff and when lesser sanctions would not serve the best interests of justice.’”

Nottingham, 837 F.3d at 441 (quoting *Bryson v. United States*, 553 F.3d 402, 403 (5th Cir. 2008) (per curiam) (in turn quoting *Callip v. Harris Cty. Child Welfare Dep’t*, 757 F.2d 1513, 1521 (5th Cir. 1985))); *see also Long*, 77 F.3d at 880 (a dismissal with

prejudice is appropriate only if the failure to comply with the court order was the result of purposeful delay or contumacious conduct and the imposition of lesser sanctions would be futile); *cf. Nottingham*, 837 F.3d at 442 (noting that “lesser sanctions” may “include assessments of fines, costs, or damages against the plaintiff, conditional dismissal, dismissal without prejudice, and explicit warnings” (quoting *Thrasher v. City of Amarillo*, 709 F.3d 509, 514 (5th Cir. 2013))).

By failing to submit verified responses to the screening questionnaire, Douglas has prevented this action from proceeding, and he therefore has failed to prosecute his lawsuit and obey the Court’s order. A Rule 41(b) dismissal of this lawsuit without prejudice is warranted under these circumstances. And the undersigned concludes that lesser sanctions would be futile. The Court is not required to delay the disposition of this case until such time as Douglas decides to comply with the Court’s order. Accordingly, the Court should exercise its inherent power to prevent undue delays in the disposition of a pending case and *sua sponte* dismiss this action without prejudice.

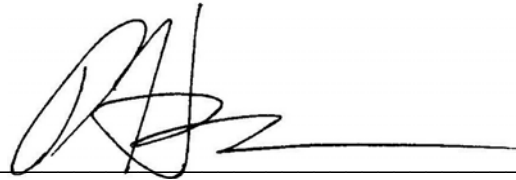
Recommendation

The Court should dismiss this action without prejudice under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 41(b).

A copy of these findings, conclusions, and recommendation shall be served on all parties in the manner provided by law. Any party who objects to any part of these findings, conclusions, and recommendation must file specific written objections within 14 days after being served with a copy. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); FED. R. CIV. P. 72(b). In order to be specific, an objection must identify the specific finding or

recommendation to which objection is made, state the basis for the objection, and specify the place in the magistrate judge's findings, conclusions, and recommendation where the disputed determination is found. An objection that merely incorporates by reference or refers to the briefing before the magistrate judge is not specific. Failure to file specific written objections will bar the aggrieved party from appealing the factual findings and legal conclusions of the magistrate judge that are accepted or adopted by the district court, except upon grounds of plain error. *See Douglass v. United Servs. Auto. Ass'n*, 79 F.3d 1415, 1417 (5th Cir. 1996).

DATED: October 27, 2017

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Horan', is written over a horizontal line.

DAVID L. HORAN
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE